

Liszt Academy of Music  
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Béla Bartók's Performing Editions of Mozart's Fantasy  
in C minor K. 475  
Towards Understanding Bartók's Sources, Notation and  
Performing Style

DLA thesis  
English summary

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## I. Background of the Research

'If we can understand what notation meant to performers of each era, might we not "hear" them perform?'<sup>1</sup>

I could say that this sentence by George Barth, written in his article 'Mozart Performance in the 19th Century', summarizes almost perfectly the essence of my research. The performance of musical notation - or, rather, the performance of what is beyond its boundaries - has always been a subject that has captured my genuine curiosity. After a conversation with my supervisor, Dr. László Vikárius, we both decided that 'Béla Bartók's Performing Editions of Mozart's Piano Sonatas' would be a fantastic field to delve into. However, from the very beginning of the research I had to organise and prioritise the scope that was open to me: on the one hand, to reflect on the limits of musical notation and its changing meaning over the years (both in the case of Mozart and Bartók); on the other hand, on a more specific level, to identify the indications Bartók had written over the editions that he used as a basis and, consequently, to understand their purpose and deeper meaning through a thorough investigation of Bartók's musical persona. This included examining his first steps as a piano student, his studies with István Thomán at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest and the musical environment in which he grew up, as well as his activity as a teacher at that institution, his writings, his recordings and his activity as an ethnomusicologist, which indeed had a profound impact on him.

From the very beginning, one of the last goals of the research was always clear: to try to shed light on and better understand the meaning of Bartók's complex musical notation through the analysis of his performing editions of Mozart's piano sonatas. However, if we limit ourselves to a purely philological problem, which indications were Bartók's original and which were not? Had Bartók received, through his sources, a specific editorial heritage? Could this heritage have influenced his genuine interpretation of Mozart's sonatas? At this point I realised that, prior to delving into the meaning of Bartók's indications, to understand the text Bartók had received - as well as its evolution over the years - was of utmost importance. Moreover, it would give me the possibility to have a clearer view of the evolution of musical notation's meaning as well as to reflect

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<sup>1</sup> George Barth: 'Mozart Performance in the 19th Century'. *Early Music*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1991). 538-555. 538.

on its limits. Since working through all Mozart's piano sonatas would be a never-ending undertaking, I chose to focus exclusively on the Fantasy in C minor K. 475 for two reasons: firstly, because its recently rediscovered manuscript has been one of the most important musicological events of the last 30 years, which made the study of its editorial development, if possible, more interesting; and secondly, because, thanks to the fantastic work Igréc Srebrenka had made in his dissertation 'Béla Bartók's Editions of Mozart's Piano Sonatas',<sup>2</sup> I knew that the source on which Bartók had based his performing edition of the Fantasy and Sonata in C minor K. 475/457 remained still unknown.

Thanks to the invaluable help of several institutions, I had access to up to a total of twenty different editions of Mozart's Fantasy in C minor, opening up to me the possibility of making a thorough comparison of all of them. It was an extremely enriching experience which gave me a broader view of how difficult and delicate undertaking editorial work is, its deeper meaning and its great importance in the transmission of the music over the years. Indeed, it also allowed me to observe, at first hand, the evolution of the meaning of musical notation throughout the 19th and early 20th century.

Having identified the source on which Bartók had based his edition of the Fantasy, the next step was to identify and organise in tables all the indications concerning articulation, accentuation, dynamics, agogic, performance and tempo with which Bartók had reflected his interpretation of Mozart's piano sonatas. However, is it possible to deeply understand the meaning of these indications simply by analysing them and their context within the work? It was at this point that I considered it was extremely important to investigate in more depth three of his most important - and less known - facets: 'Bartók the pianist', 'Bartók the teacher' and 'Bartók the essayist'. How was Bartók's performing style as a pianist? How was Bartók as a teacher? What were Bartók's thoughts about such important topics as musical interpretation, the new music production of his time or the use of folk music material in composition? His writings, his recordings and the rest of his performing editions are, at this point, of transcendental relevance in order to try to put together the pieces of the puzzle 'Bartók the musician' and, thus, to reach a deeper understanding of the meaning of his musical notation.

Eventually, after having delved into the limits of musical notation, into the deeper meaning of what musical editing means and its relevance in the last centuries, into the figure of Bartók as a musician and, more specifically, into the meaning of his musical

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<sup>2</sup> Igréc Srebrenka: *Béla Bartók's Edition of Mozart's Piano Sonatas* (Baton Rouge: The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1993).

notation, will we be able to 'hear' Bartók playing the Andantino of Mozart's Fantasy in C minor by simply reading his performing edition?

## II. Sources

I had access to a wide variety of sources thanks, in a large extent, to the help of institutions such as the Liszt Ferenc Zeneakadémia, various libraries and their easy online accessibility.

For the first chapter, the contributions of the Bibliotheca Mozartiana in Salzburg, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, the Liszt Ferenc Zeneakadémia Központi Könyvtár in Budapest, the Liszt Ferenc Zeneakadémia Kutatókönyvtára, also in Budapest, and the Staatliche Bibliothek in Regensburg were of invaluable help for having access to a total of twenty different editions of the Fantasy in C minor K. 475 by W. A. Mozart - ranging from the autograph to present-day editions. Also, articles such as *Mozart Performance in the 19th Century* by George Barth, *The Old and New Mozart Editions* by Cliff Eisen, *The Rediscovered Autograph of Mozart's Fantasy and Sonata in C minor, K. 475/457* by Eugene K. Wolf; books such as *Interpreting Mozart on the Keyboard* by Eva and Paul Badura-Skoda, *Baroque Music Today: Music As Speech. Ways to a New Understanding of Music* by Nikolaus Harnoncourt; or the doctoral thesis *The Historical Editing of Mozart's Keyboard Sonatas: History, Context and Practice* by Christina A. Georgiou, were fundamental for the development of the first chapter of the dissertation.

In the second chapter, both Bartók's writings (collected by Benjamin Suchoff in his book *Béla Bartók Essays*), his recordings (collected in an invaluable ten-hour-collection of recordings<sup>3</sup>) and his more than 2000 pages of exquisitely and scrupulously notated performing editions of Haydn, Beethoven, Bach, Scarlatti, etc. were the foundations on which I based much of the research. Moreover, the figure of László Somfai was, almost omnipresent, behind much of the research through such fundamental books as *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources* or such important articles as *Nineteenth-Century Ideas Developed in Bartók's Piano Notation in the Years 1907-14* or *Béla Bartók's Concept of Genuine and Valuable Art*. Likewise, authors such as Vera Lampert and her article *Bartók at the piano: lessons from the composer's sound*

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<sup>3</sup> *Bartók hangfelvételei Centenáriumi összkiadás*: I. album: Somfai László, Kocsis Zoltán (szerk., 1981): Bartók zongorázik 1920–1945. Eredeti hanglemezek, gépzongora[-]felvételek, koncertfelvételek. Budapest: Hungaroton, LPX 12326–33.; II. album: Somfai László, Sebestyén János, Kocsis Zoltán (szerk., 1981): Bartók hangja és zongorajátéka 1912–1944. Magánfelvételek és családi fonográfhengerek. Töredékek. Budapest: Hungaroton, LPX 12334–38.

recordings or the doctoral thesis *Béla Bartók's Editions of Mozart's Piano Sonatas* by Igréc Srebrenka were sources of great help. Finally, the recordings of Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos K. 448 in D Major made by the duos of Josef and his wife Rosina Lhévinne and Béla Bartók and his wife Ditta Pásztory<sup>4</sup> served as basis for the development of a comparative study between the interpretation of both duos and, consequently, for delving more in depth into the main features of Bartók's unique performing style.

In the third and final chapter, the comparison between the edition served Bartók as a basis for his work (namely the C. F. Peters edited by Louis Köhler and Richard Schmidt from 1879) and his own performing edition was the basis on which the whole chapter was built. Sporadically, recordings of the Fantasy in C minor K. 475 by Ernő Dohnányi<sup>5</sup> and Carl Reinecke<sup>6</sup> support the development of the chapter.

### III. Research Methods

The comparison between the different sources (namely twenty different editions of W. A. Mozart's Fantasy in C minor K. 475) was the basic research method both for the development of the first chapter and its conclusions as well. As a first step, I contacted the Bibliotheca Mozartiana in Salzburg in order to have access to the 7th printing of Artaria's first edition from 1785. Thanks to the 'Kritische Berichte' to the Neue Mozart Ausgabe<sup>7</sup>, I realised all the changes that both the 7th print of this edition and André's edition from 1801 had introduced regarding the 1st print of the first edition and the Autograph (both available online). Moreover, I also had access to the second edition of the Fantasy in C minor, made by Longman and Broderip in London in 1786. Thanks to Adrien Csabai and the Liszt Ferenc Zeneakadémia Kutatókönyvtára in Budapest, I had access to the 1799 Breitkopf und Härtel edition known as *Oeuvres Complètes* [sic] and the 1826 edition made by Tobias Haslinger. Again, the Bibliotheca Mozartiana provided me with the editions made by the publishing house Offenbach with Johann Anton André as main editor, one dated 1802 and the other 1842. Available online, I found an 1860 edition by the same Offenbach publishing house in the Staatliche Bibliothek in

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<sup>4</sup> Recording of Béla Bartók's performance of Mozart's Sonata for two Pianos in D Major K. 448, released in *Centenary Edition of Bartók's Records*. Vol. II: *Bartók Plays and Talks, 1912-1944*. Somfai László, Sebestyén János, Kocsis Zoltán (eds.). Budapest: Hungaroton, LPX 12326–33.

<sup>5</sup> Recording of Ernst von Dohnányi's performance of Mozart's Fantasy in C minor K. 475 made on the 28th of February of 1954 during a concert in Athens, Ohio. Dohnányi Collection of the Archives for 20th-21st Century Music of the Institute for Musicology RCH of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

<sup>6</sup> Recording made on a Hupfeld piano roll in 1905.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfgang Rehm. 'Kritische Berichte' to the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe, Serie IX, Werkgruppe 25. Klaviersonaten Band I und II*. Kassel-Basel-London-New York-Prague: Bärenreiter, 1998.

Regensburg. Access to the famous *Alte Mozart Ausgabe* (AMA), published by Breitkopf und Härtel in 1878, was easily available online. However, thanks to Máté Mesterházi and the Liszt Ferenc Zeneakadémia Központi Könyvtár in Budapest, I was able to access the so-called *Akademische Ausgabe* (AA), by the same publisher and edited by Ernst Rudorff in 1895. Finally, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris provided me with a copy of the C. F. Peters edition by Louis Köhler and Richard Schmidt in 1879. Likewise, the copies of the performing editions by Béla Bartók and Sigmund Lebert (from 1910 and 1892 respectively) that close the chapter were provided to me by my supervisor, Dr. László Vikárius. The comparison, chronologically developed, of all these scores is the main focus of the first chapter.

The first step for the elaboration of the second chapter was the separation of all the indications that Bartók wrote in his performing editions of Mozart's piano sonatas by the in-depth analysis of them. Indeed, this work facilitated the elaboration of the compilation tables in which these indications are listed and classified according to their nature: articulation, accentuation, dynamics, agogic, tempo and interpretation. Once these indications had been identified and classified, the interrelation of them with all the information gathered in books (*Béla Bartók Essays*, by Benjamin Suchoff; *Bartók and his World*, by Peter Laki; or *Bartók Remembered*, by Malcom Gillies), articles (*Natura naturans, natura naturata*, by Maria Anna Harley; *Bartók's Heiress*, by Büky Virág; or *Did He Mean It?* by Richard Taruskin, among others) and recordings was fundamental for becoming more familiar with Bartók's genuine performing style as well as for achieving a better understanding of his musical notation.

The third and final chapter, which acts indeed as a summary of the previous two, is an analysis of Bartók's performing edition of Mozart's Fantasy in C minor K. 475 - more specifically, the *Andantino* section. The sentence that George Barth writes in his article *Mozart Performance in the 19th Century* ('If we can understand what notation meant to performers of each era, might we not "hear" them perform?') serves as a basis - and a desire - for the elaboration of the whole analysis, together with sporadic comparisons of Bartók's performing edition with Ernő Dohnányi's and Carl Reinecke's recordings of the Fantasy.

#### **IV. Research Results**

Along the course of the research, many questions emerged. In the first chapter, issues related to music publishing - interpretation of the manuscript, interpretation of the

notation of the time, editorial evolution over the years (and its close relationship to the historical and cultural moment of each era,) the rise of the *amateur* performer and the growing need for composers to have greater control over the musical text - were constant throughout the chapter. In fact, I am convinced that, during the arduous work involved in its elaboration, I learned far more from all the questions that arose at each step than from the few conclusions I was able to draw. What does it mean 'to edit' a musical piece? Is it enough to simply transcribe accurately - at best - the musical notation that the author left in the autograph – if it exists? Has this always been the aim throughout the history of music? Why has ‘the need to reflect in the score not only simply “the work” but also its “performance” through new musical notation’<sup>8</sup> progressively increased over the years up to the present day? Is this the reason - or one of them - why musical notation has progressively changed its meaning over the last 300 years? Is it possible to accurately reflect the work 'in its personal appearance'<sup>9</sup> simply by using musical notation? Where are the limits of musical notation? All these questions appeared as I progressed in the study of the editorial evolution, from the autograph to Béla Bartók's performing edition, of W. A. Mozart's Fantasy in C minor K. 475. The main goal of this study, pursued in the first chapter, was to identify both the source on which Bartók had based his performing edition of the Fantasy and the editorial inheritance he had received. Both questions were satisfactorily resolved. However, as I have said before, the 'journey' involved in the elaboration of the chapter was extremely enriching.

The conclusions drawn in the second chapter of the dissertation can be divided into two interrelated groups: on the one hand, the results of the investigation of the three lesser known facets of Bartók - namely 'Bartók the pianist', Bartók the teacher' and 'Bartók the essayist' - and, on the other hand, the relation established between the conclusions drawn from the study of those Bartók's lesser known facets and the notation Bartók used in his Performing editions, compiled in five tables in the second part of the chapter. The main objective of these deductions is to try to shed some more light on the possible meaning of Bartók's notation. With regard to the first part of the chapter, I found particularly interesting the research and the - more or less clear - conclusions I was able to draw regarding the relationship between Bartók's performing style and his devotion to

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<sup>8</sup> Nikolaus Harnoncourt: *Baroque Music Today: Music As Speech. Ways to a New Understanding of Music*, trans. Mary O'Neill (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1988). 11. Originally published as *Musik als Klangrede* (Salzburg and Wien: Residenz Verlag, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Suchoff (ed.): *Béla Bartók Essays* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992). 292.

popular music. This was reflected not only in his travels, in which he collected countless folk songs, but also in his writings and in his own music, completely permeated by it. As a result, in his genuine performing style we find that magical mixture between 'turn-of-the-century romantic practice - the informal, declamatory *rubato* of the kind of music centred on Liszt that even stepped out of bars - and the *parlando rubato* - the speech rhythms of peasant music, that is the flexible way in which the rhythm of a tune adjusts to the text, and even to the emphatic lengthening's of particular performances'.

The third and last chapter, as mentioned before, acts as a summary of the two previous chapters. The most important conclusion of this short chapter is that, despite knowing the more than probable source on which Bartók based his performing edition and the notation he used to edit them; understanding the editorial heritage he received; delving deeper into his personal performing style; having had the opportunity to know, through his writings, his opinions on many different musical subjects; and having been able to listen to Bartók himself perform both his own music and that of other composers, his performing editions bare the same limitations as musical notation does, so consequently they are as ambiguous as they are fascinating, as they suggest an endless number of possible interpretations.

## **V. Documentation of the Activity Related to the Subject Matter of the Dissertation**

14 September 2019, 'Bartók and the Piano' International Symposium, Budapest.

*Bartók's Performing Editions of Mozart's Piano Sonatas: A Graphic Representation of the So-Called Vienna-Budapest Tradition and Bartók's Personal Performing Practice.* Lecture.

30 August 2022, Jókai Anna Szalon, Budapest. Lecture recital.

*Programme:* Works by Mozart, Bartók and Schubert, featuring Morgane de Lafforest, cellist.

14 February 2023, Real Academia Galega de Belas Artes, A Coruña. Lecture recital.

*Programme:* Works by Beethoven, Schumann and Bartók, featuring Morgane de Lafforest, cellist.

22 March 2023, Conservatorio Profesional de Música, Santiago de Compostela. Lecture recital.

*Programme:* Works by Mozart, Bartók, Schumann and Schubert, featuring Millán Abeledo Malheiro, cellist.